European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Finland

Overview of the National Disaster Management System

In Finland, Rescue Services operate under the Rescue Act (379/2011) and other similar acts. The Department for Rescue Services at the Ministry of the Interior is in charge of the organisation of rescue services at national level, guides and directs rescue services, and coordinates the activities of various ministries and sectors in the field of rescue services and their development. The Department also makes decisions about international assistance.

There are 22 independent regional rescue departments in Finland that provide urgent help in the event of an accident or natural hazard. Annually, the rescue services carry out approximately 100,000 rescue missions. Volunteer fire brigades, contracted with regional rescue departments, play an important role in the rescue services system. They contribute to firefighting and rescue operations and participate in approximately 60% of annual rescue service operations. In addition, there are 53 different voluntary organisations that support the national rescue services authorities in Finland.

When resources are insufficient, rescue departments can ask mutual administrative support from other authorities that can provide skilled staff or equipment as required. This administrative support is regulated by law.
**Prevention**

**Overview**

The Rescue Act lays down the responsibilities of various parties in performing rescue service duties and aims to prevent accidents and limit the consequences of accidents. Responsibilities vary from individuals’ duty of care in handling fire to accident prevention duties of the regional rescue departments.

Rescue service authorities and departments are responsible for instructing, advising, educating, and supervising various parties from individuals to industrial operators on how to fulfil their duties under the Rescue Act. To prevent accidents and maintain safety, rescue departments cooperate with other authorities and communities and residents in the region and participate in local safety planning work.

**Risk assessment**

National risk assessments (NRA) define risks that have a wide national impact in Finland and identify their impact on the vital functions of the society. They cover different threat scenarios or disruptions that are divided into threats imposed on the stability of the society, technology, and logistics as well as health security and large-scale accidents.

The main risks identified by the NRA in 2018 include information operations, terrorist attacks and disruptions caused by climate change. Risks affecting the stability of the society include a serious disruption of the public economy, use of military force or large-scale immigration. Examples of such disruptions are large-scale disruptions in electricity supply or serious disruptions in communication networks. Health security risks include a pandemic influenza and large-scale accidents denote a serious nuclear accident in Finland or its adjacent areas.

**Risk management planning**

Preparedness is based on the preparedness obligation laid down in the Emergency Powers Act (1552/2011), the Rescue Act and other legislation. According to the Rescue Act, emergency preparedness planning and cooperation is the duty of the rescue services authorities. The Ministry of the Interior coordinates the preparedness of rescue services in Finland, and regional rescue departments are required to support the preparedness planning of municipalities in their area. In addition, every citizen should be prepared for all types of emergencies and disruptions as well as they can.

Finland’s Security Strategy for Society harmonises national preparedness principles and guides preparedness in the various administrative branches. This strategy is based on the Finnish concept of comprehensive security.

Civil defence shelters, an essential part of preparedness in Finland, provide protection for the population particularly against a military threat in the most densely populated areas. These shelters protect against the effects of explosions and splinters, collapse of buildings, blasts, radiation and substances hazardous to health. At present, Finland has about 45,000 civil defence shelters accommodating about 3.6 million people. All shelters must be available for civil defence purposes within 72 hours.

**Risk communication and awareness raising**

Safety communications in Finland consist of safety advice, training, and education covering guidance, education and counselling work mentioned in the Rescue Act. Safety communications strategy guides the planning, evaluation and development of safety communications of all rescue services actors and organisations.

Regional rescue departments are responsible of safety communications and awareness raising in their region, for instance, by informing citizens of their self-acting obligations regarding emergency prevention and planning. General awareness and communication is often coordinated through social media and news.

There are also various annual fire safety awareness campaigns and safety co-operation campaigns in Finland that contribute to the national awareness raising on safety. For example, Fire Safety Week aims to improve fire safety and fire safety skills by stimulating social debates, and Accident Day raises awareness on safety risks, accidents and accident
Preparedness

Training and exercises

The Emergency Services Academy Finland arranges basic and advanced fire and rescue training, civil protection and preparedness training, and other training in emergency operations. It is also responsible for the execution of national exercises.

Regional rescue departments are responsible for ensuring that volunteer fire brigades or other contracting organisations have adequate training for their jobs. This training is conducted mainly by the Finnish National Rescue Association (SPEK) and regional rescue service organisations. SPEK also provides further training relating to rescue services for individuals, organizations and the authorities, as well as safety training for public bodies, central government agencies and businesses.

In addition, different levels of the national administration in Finland execute training both separately and together. Finland also participates actively in EU and international exercises and is often involved in organising them too.

Early warning systems

In Finland, the authorities can issue emergency warnings when the public faces threats to life or health or when property is at risk of destruction or significant damage. An all clear may also be given when the danger has passed.

Densely populated areas are equipped with stationary sirens and loudspeakers, which are used to warn the population with a predefined signal. These systems are maintained by the regional rescue services. In addition, emergency warnings are broadcasted on the radio channels and TV. The Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE) also issues emergency warnings via its website and teletext service. Warnings are always issued in Finnish and Swedish. If the danger or its consequences affect the Saami areas, the warning will also be given in Saami language.

Finland’s main early warning system in the field of natural disasters, The LUOVA system, is a service for authorities that provides natural disaster warnings both in Finland and abroad. Finnish Meteorological Institute (FMI) works as LUOVA’s main information provider and produces real-time situation awareness pictures with comprehensive information on dangerous weather, floods and earthquakes among other things. Other information providers include the Institute of Seismology of the University of Helsinki and the Finnish Environment Institute. FMI’s LUOVA duty officer follows different information and observation sources every day around the clock, and produces and conveys LUOVA-bulletin to the system when needed.

Emergency Response

Emergency response centres (112) are the first step in the emergency response chain for help and safety in Finland. They receive emergency calls for the rescue, police, and health and social services, and relay the information they receive to the appropriate assisting authorities or partners. Emergency response centres also advise and guide the caller in first aid and follow-up.

The Emergency Response Centre Agency provides emergency response centre services throughout Finland, except for the Åland Islands. There are 6 emergency response centres in Finland located in Kerava, Kuopio, Oulu, Vaasa, Pori and Turku, with a common headquarters in Pori.

The Emergency Response Centre Administration is an agency under the Ministry of the Interior. The Ministry is jointly responsible for the performance management of the agency together with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

Cross-border, European and international cooperation

Finland participates in international civil protection operations through the European Union and international organisations, and in accordance with bilateral and multilateral international treaties. In addition, Finland can give or receive civil protection assistance based on multilateral international treaties. Finland has implemented its Host Nation Support guidelines based on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism.
The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for international civil protection assistance. Finland's partners in international cooperation include the EU, the Nordic countries and other neighbouring areas, the UN and its subsidiaries, NATO, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Arctic Council.